

# Building confidence and managing your child's anxiety



Presented by Khadija and Oyin

14<sup>th</sup> March 2022

# Ground Rules

- Confidentiality
- Put phones on silent
- Respect each other's opinions/experiences
- Ask questions! Be curious!
- Keep yourselves safe – sharing your experience can be difficult



# Aims of the session

- To understand what anxiety is
- To explain about different factors that lead to the development of anxiety in children
- To help you think about things you can do as parents to manage anxiety and build confidence in your child

# What do children worry about?



# What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a normal emotion, and in the right amounts it can be useful



# Anxiety has three main parts to it



- Physical sensations in the body
- Anxious thoughts
- Anxious behaviour

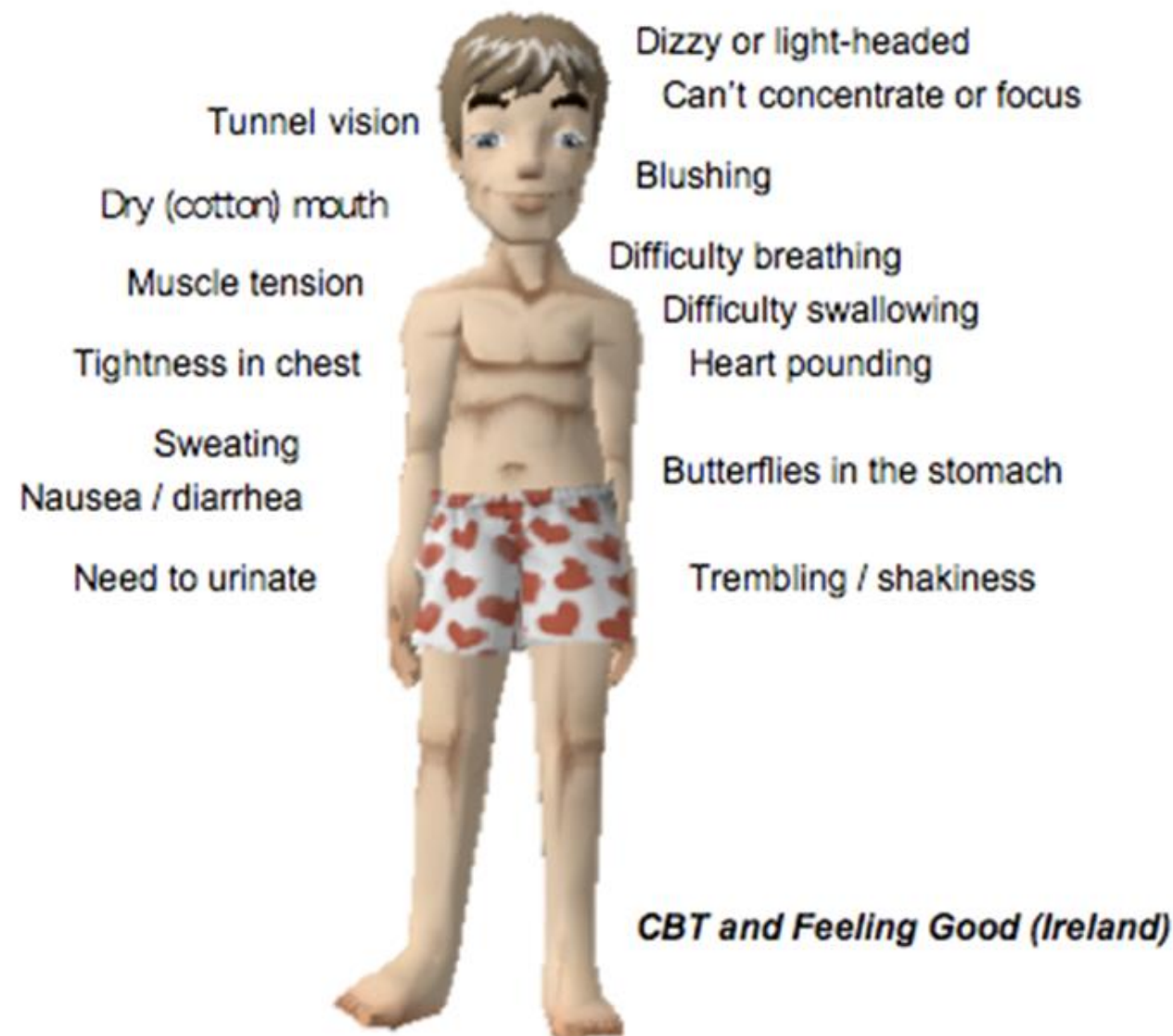


- **IMPORTANT:** anxiety affects children and parents alike!

# Physical symptoms

## The Physiology of Fight or Flight

What we know is happening...





# Anxious thoughts

- It is really common to mistake the physical aspect of anxiety as being a symptom of something serious, like an illness
- Always being on the look out for danger
- Worrying that something bad will happen
- Thinking they won't be able to cope



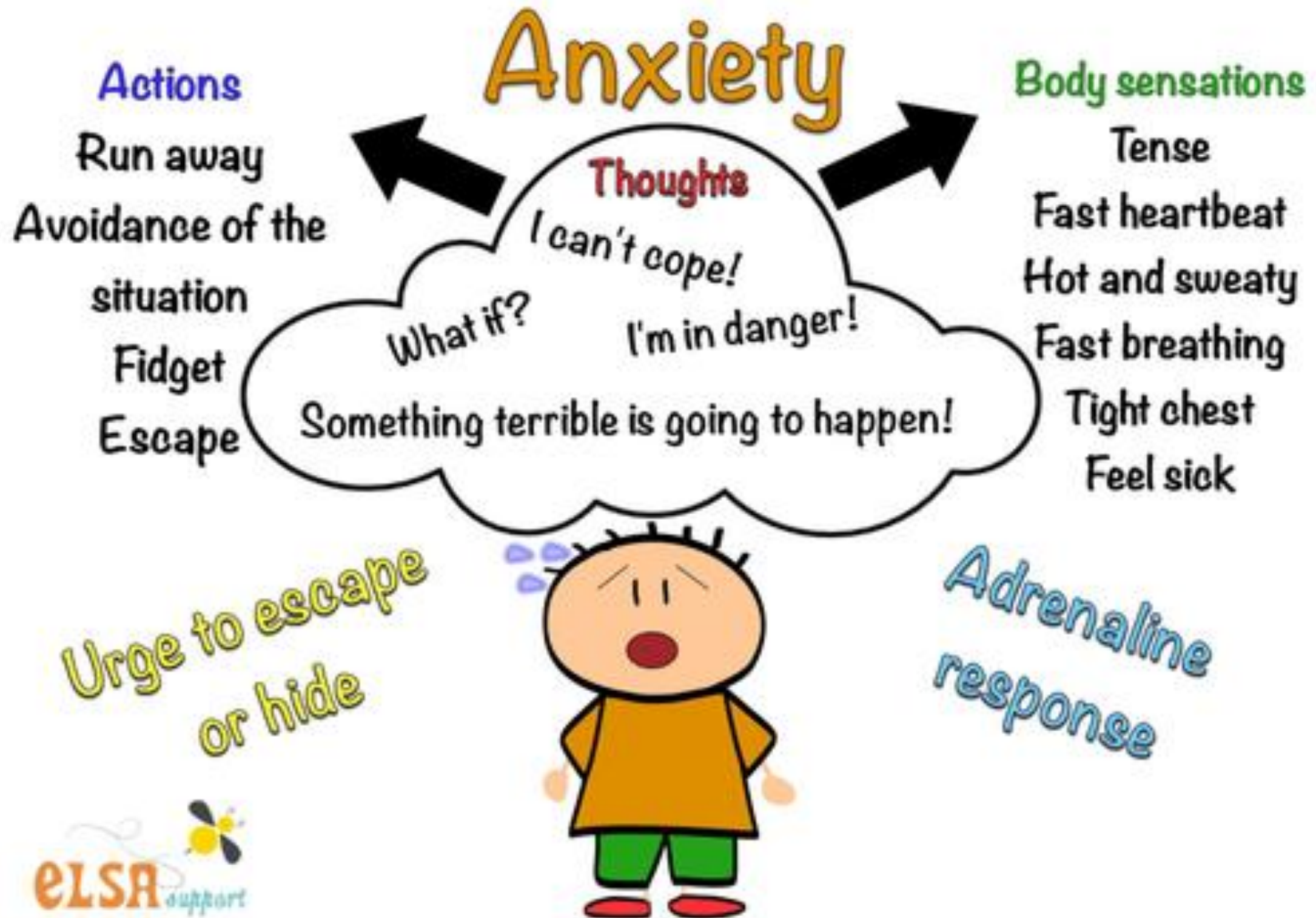


# Anxious behaviour

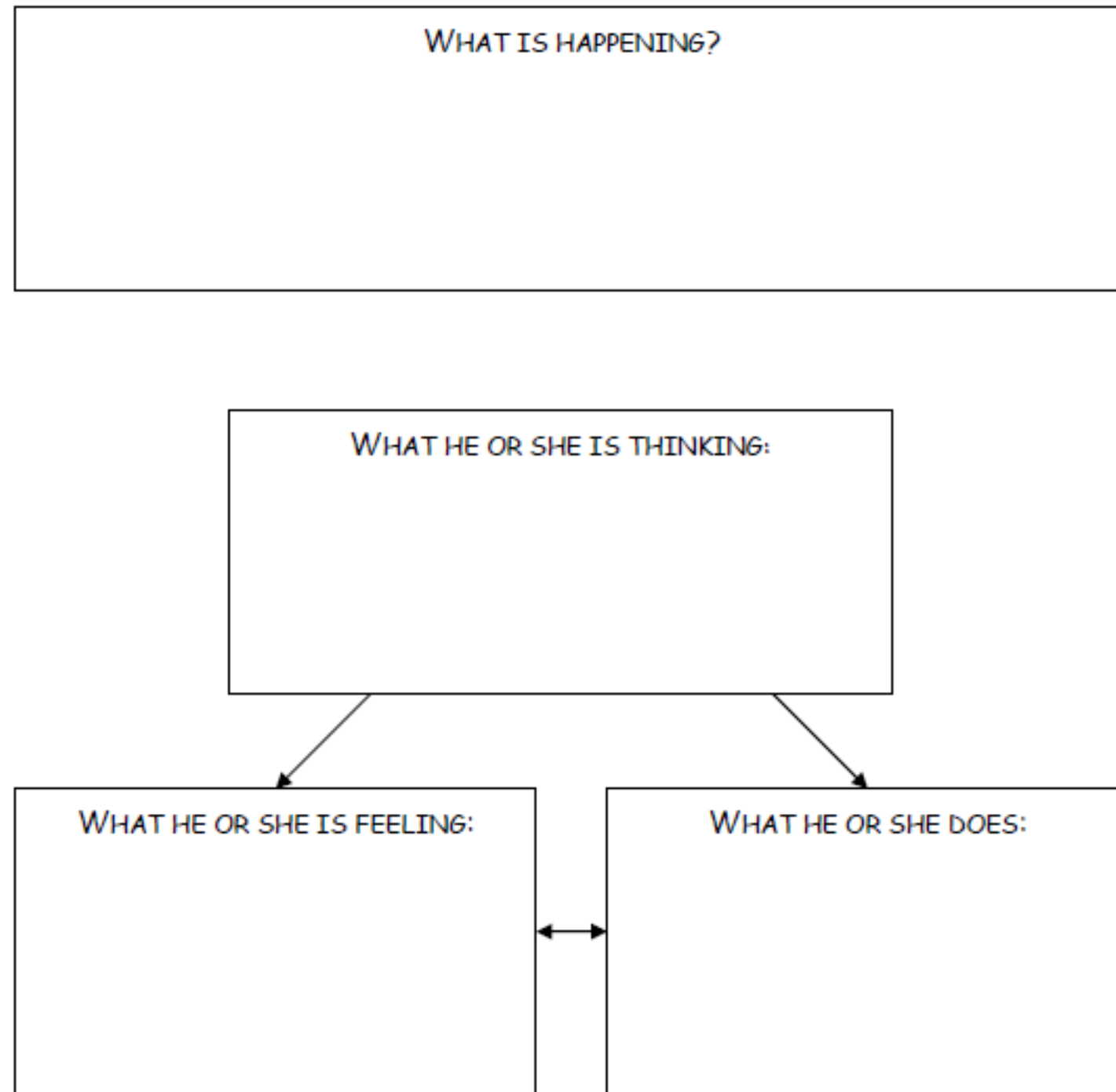
- Seek reassurance often
- Avoid situations they are worried or frightened of
- Tell you they have a physical pain such as stomach ache
- Dislike trying new things or taking risks
- Get upset easily
- Experience frequent emotional outbursts
- Avoid talking or eye contact
- Be very clingy
- Repeated checking



# These three characteristics can feed into each other



# Applying it to your child...



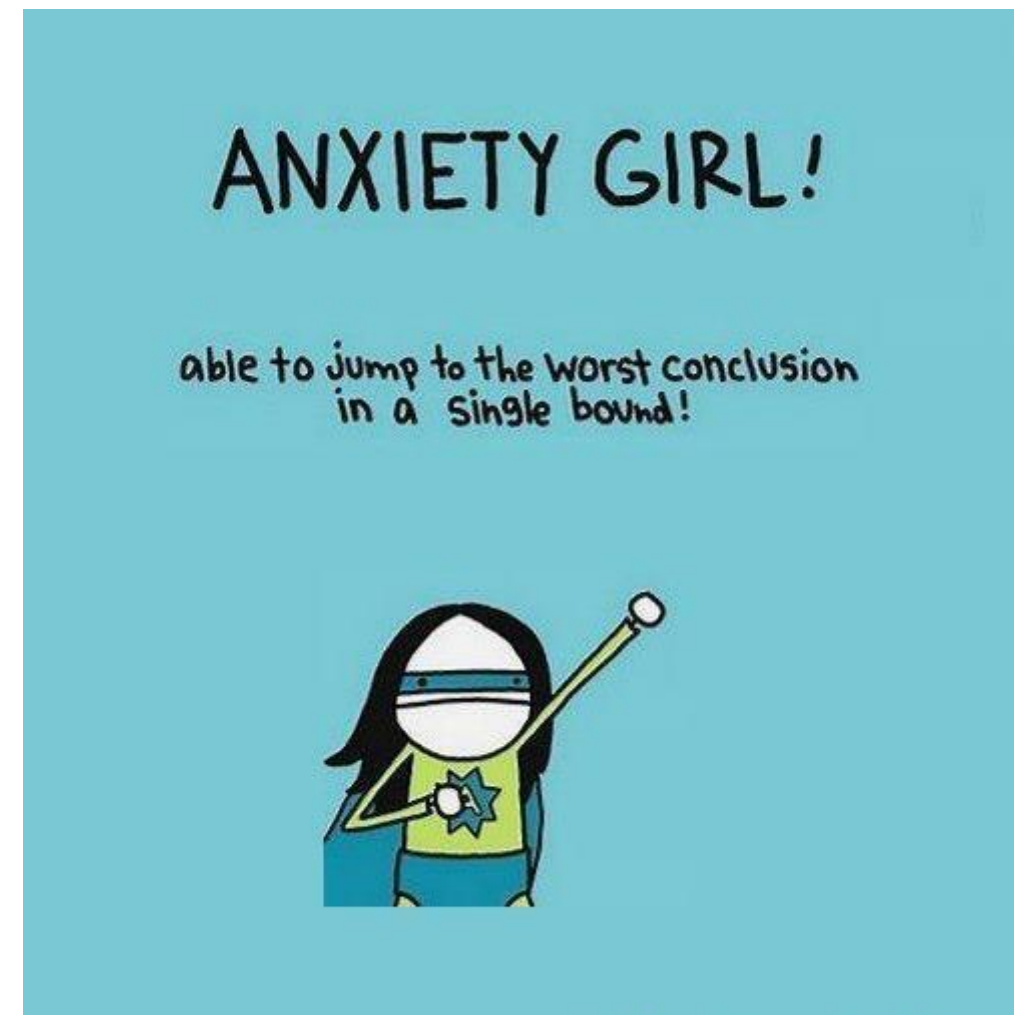
# Some fears and worries are a normal stage of child development (Moore and Carr, 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Developmental stage</i>	<i>Fears and worries</i>
<i>0–6 months</i>	<i>Sensory</i>	<i>Strong sensory stimuli (e.g. loud noises); loss of support</i>
<i>6–12 months</i>	<i>Sensori-motor: cause and effect; object-constancy</i>	<i>Strangers; separation from care givers</i>
<i>2–4 years</i>	<i>Pre-operational thinking: imagination, but limited distinction between fantasy and reality</i>	<i>Imaginary creatures; potential burglars; the dark</i>
<i>5–7 years</i>	<i>Concrete operational thinking: Concrete, logical thinking</i>	<i>Natural disasters; injury/illness/death; animals; media-based fears</i>
<i>8–11 years</i>	<i>Self esteem based on academic and athletic abilities</i>	<i>Poor academic and athletic performance</i>
<i>12–18 years</i>	<i>Formal operational thinking: meta-thinking and anticipation of future dangers. Self esteem based on peer relationships</i>	<i>Peer rejection; world issues</i>



# So... is anxiety a problem for your child?

- **When did the symptoms develop:** are they a “normal” response to something that’s happening in their lives, e.g. starting school
- **How strong is their worry?** Is it becoming hard for them/you to manage?
- **Is the anxiety stopping them from doing what they want to/should be doing/what they used to do in the past?**
  - In their social life (causing problems with friendships)
  - Academically (stopping them from doing as well as they used to do)
  - In their mood (are they miserable/low as a result?)
- **Is their anxiety stopping you from doing what you want to do?** e.g. going out/to work



# Why might anxiety develop in children?



**Genes/ temperament**

**Coping experiences**

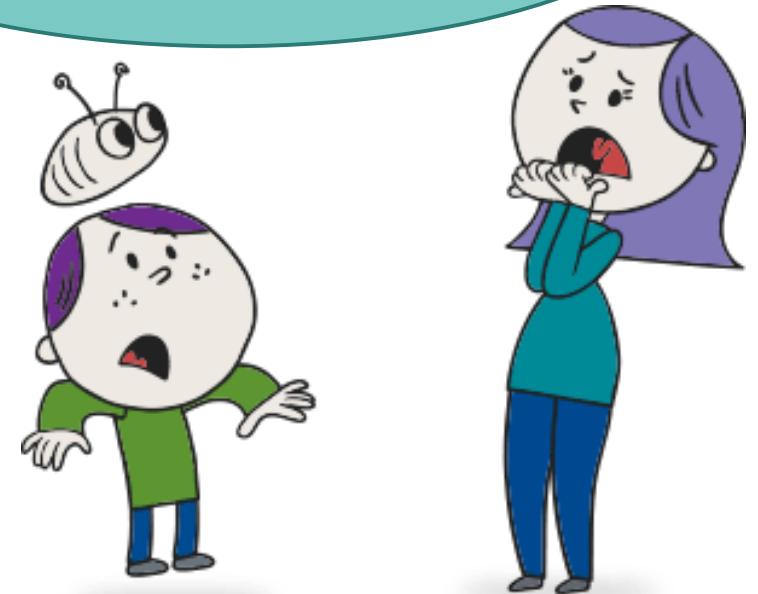


**Learning from other people's reactions**

**Learning by example**



**Life events**





# What keeps anxiety going?

## Things children do

### ➤ Anxious thinking

Noticing/ remembering things that fit in with their worries

Overestimating danger

Underestimating their ability to cope

### ➤ Misinterpret physical symptoms of anxiety

“Something is wrong with me”

“I can’t bear this feeling”

### ➤ Anxious behaviour

Avoiding situations they fear

Seeking reassurance from others



## Things others do

Demonstrate **anxious behaviour themselves**

React to their child **in an anxious way**

Become very **involved or protective**

Continually **reassure them** rather getting them to think about the situation for themselves

Don't encourage them **to try or do new things**

# What can we do to help?



# Parenting is HARD

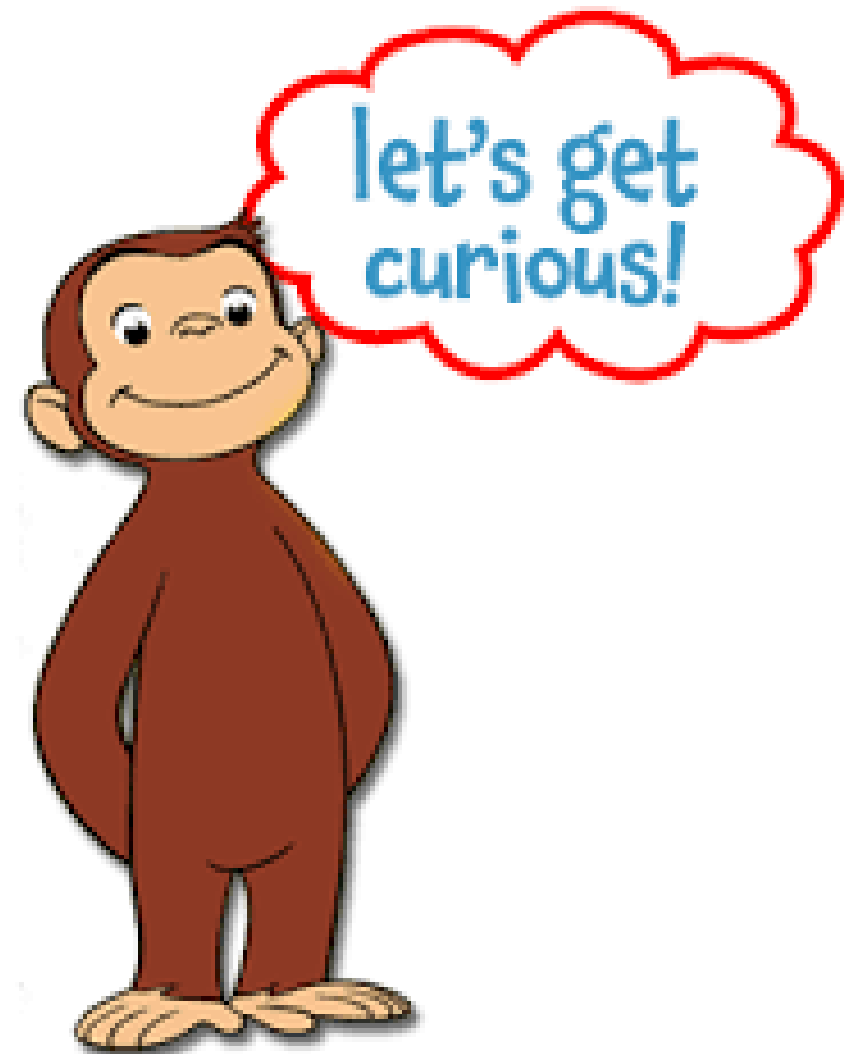
**We are biologically programmed to protect and care for our children and to try to always make things better.**

**But sometimes it can maintain the problem rather than improve it...**



# Find out more from your child

- Be curious about your child's thoughts and feelings
- Don't rush to reassure them, but ask them open questions about the thoughts they are having (What or Why)
- This will help you to understand their anxiety better

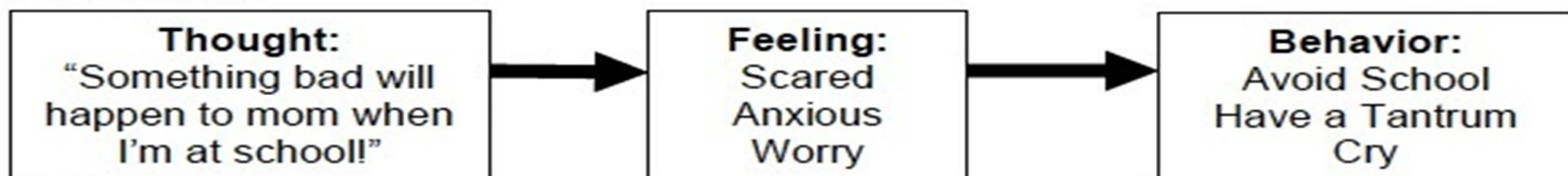




# Help your child to think positively

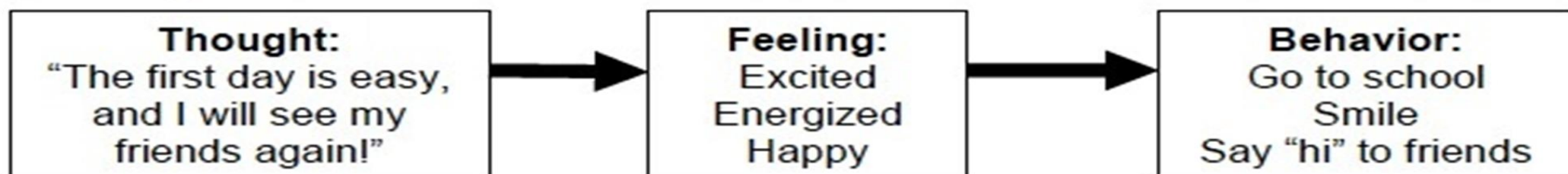
- Help your child to think about whether the thought is realistic or helpful
- If it isn't, encourage them to think about what might be a more realistic or helpful thought

## *Anxious Thoughts*



*Or alternatively,*


## *Helpful Thoughts*



# An example: “Thinking like a Judge”





- Get into small groups or pairs
- Choose a thought and come up with evidence (for and against)
- Think of alternative, more helpful thoughts to replace the thought

**Putting Thoughts on Trial**

 In this exercise, you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge, to determine the accuracy of the thought.

**Prosecution and Defense:** Gather evidence in support of, and against, your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses, or opinions!

**Judge:** Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?

 <b>The Thought</b>	
 <b>The Defense</b> <i>evidence for the thought</i>	 <b>The Prosecution</b> <i>evidence against the thought</i>
 <b>The Judge's Verdict</b>	

© 2017 Therapist Aid LLC Provided by [TherapistAid.com](http://TherapistAid.com)



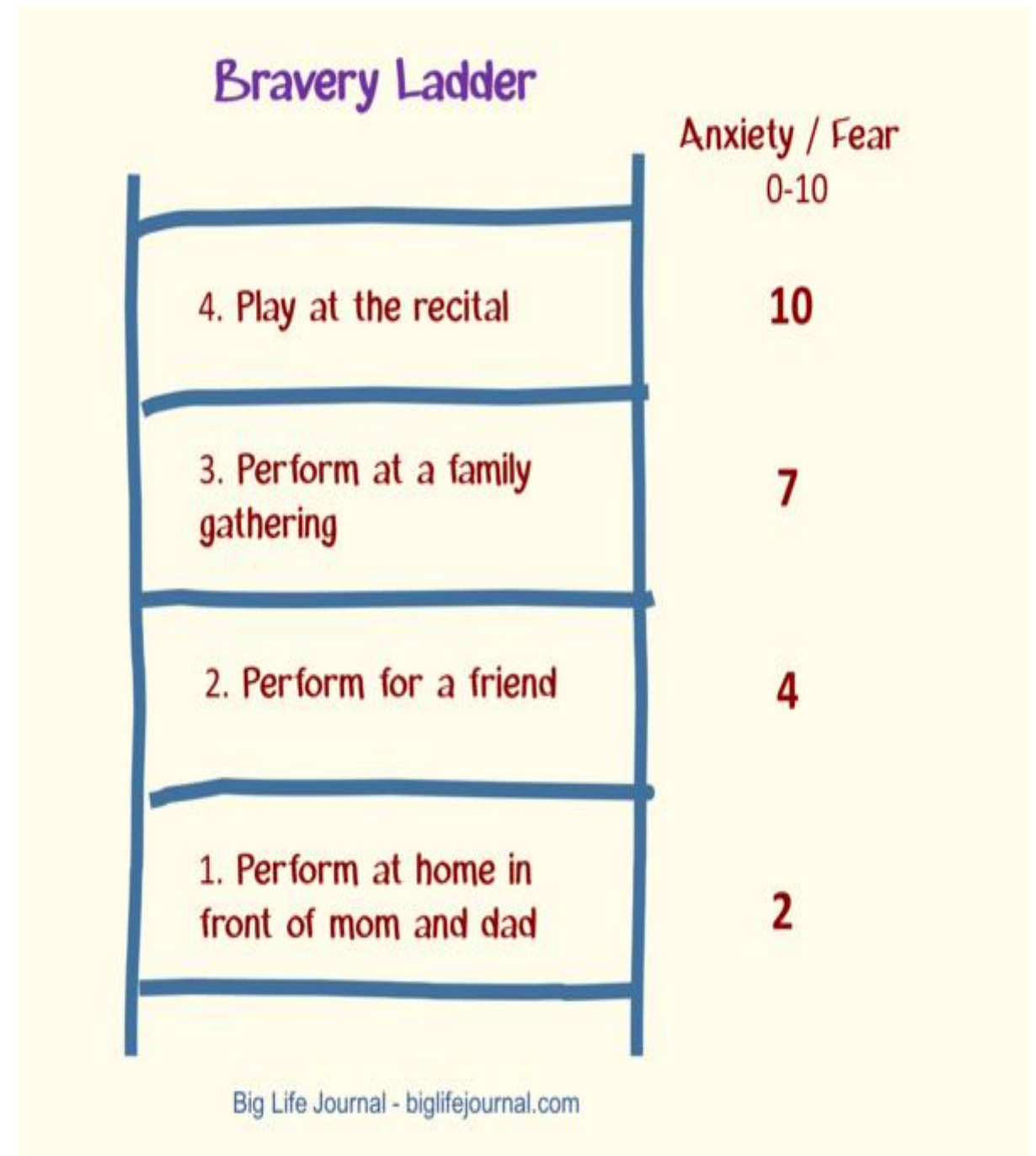
# Encourage bravery

- ***Be confident in your child – and let them know you are confident!***
- ***Show your child how to be independent.***
- ***Allow and encourage them to be independent rather than jumping in and doing things for them.***
- ***Be tolerant of and respect their struggle, rather than criticising them.***
- ***Slowly build up what your child can do.***
- ***Give your child choices, rather than choosing for them.***



# An example: “Bravery Ladder”

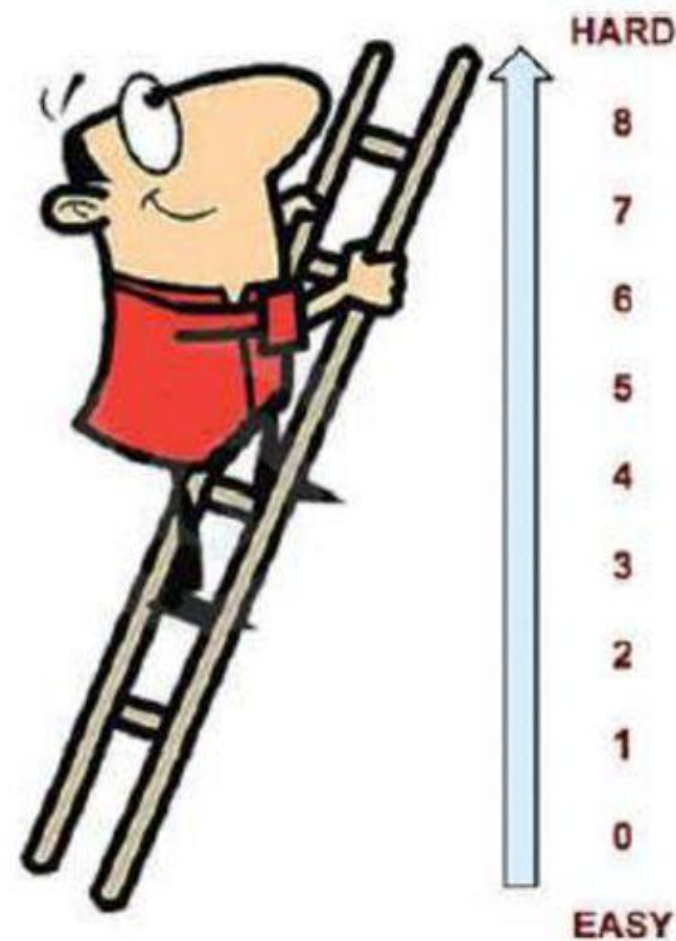
- Imagine you are the parent of Sam who is 8 years old and doesn’t want to go upstairs by himself.
- In groups, come up with a possible ladder for Sam
- Think of ways to encourage Sam to complete each step



# “Bravery Ladder” continued

## BRAVERY LADDER

- Hardest behavior at top, easiest behavior at bottom
- Take (emotional, physiological) temperature along way
- Earn Bravery Dollars
- Use labeled praise



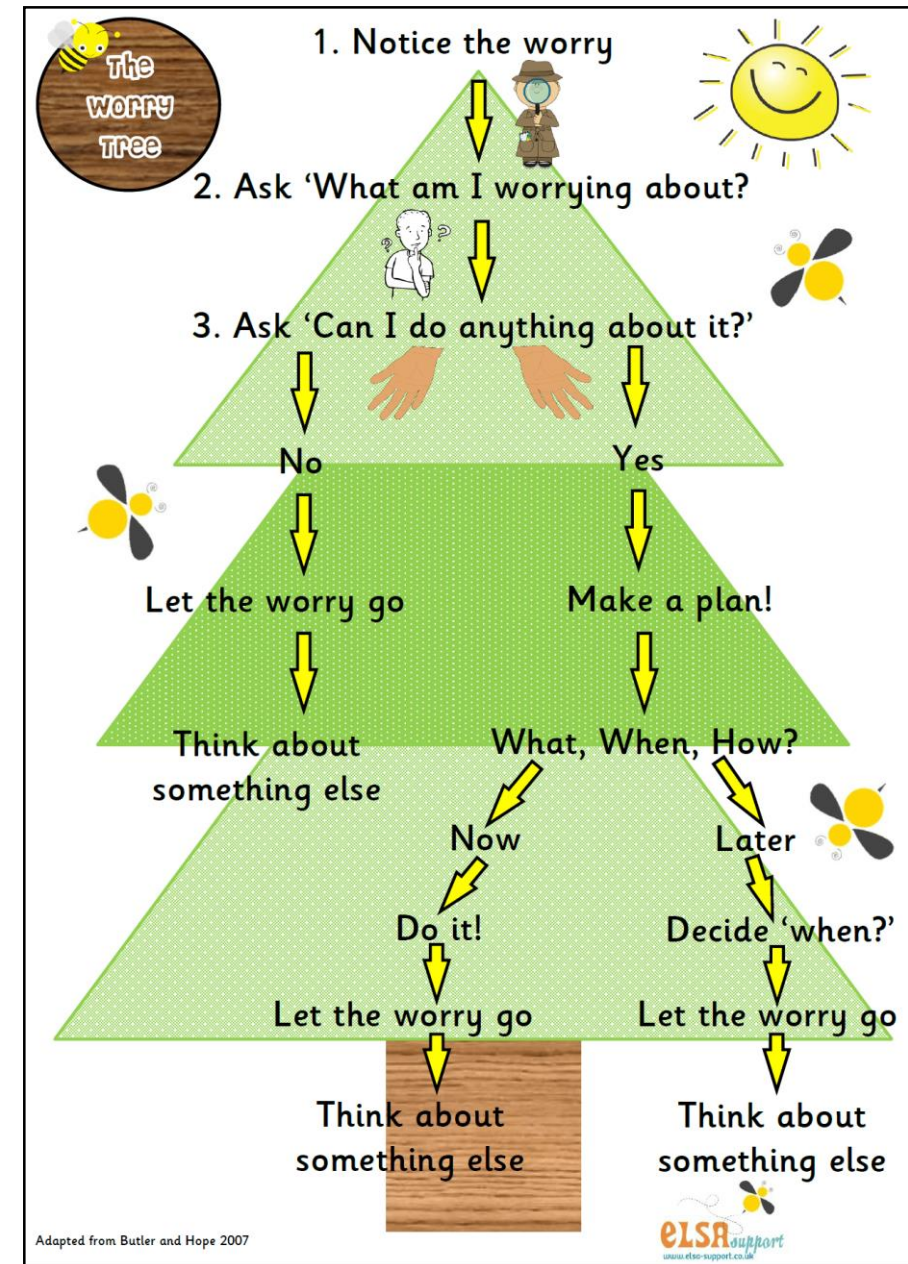


# Other useful strategies to help children cope by themselves

- Worry Time/ Box/Monster



- Worry Tree



# Things to think about

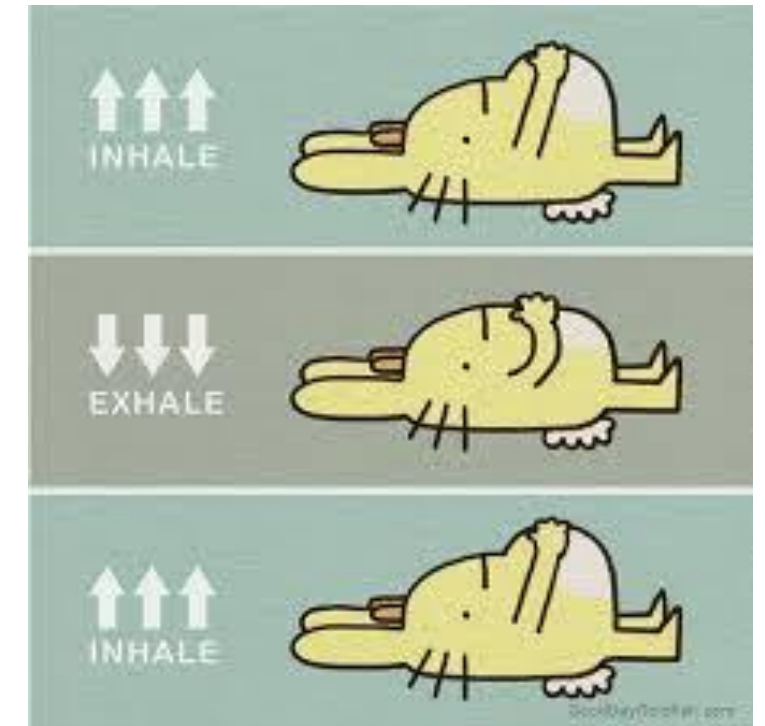
- Be aware of your own anxiety responses, and those of others around them
- Be aware that your child might well notice when you're anxious
- Try and think of ways to manage your own anxious feelings
- Sometimes this just isn't possible – so problem solve another way round it e.g. can your partner or a friend help out?





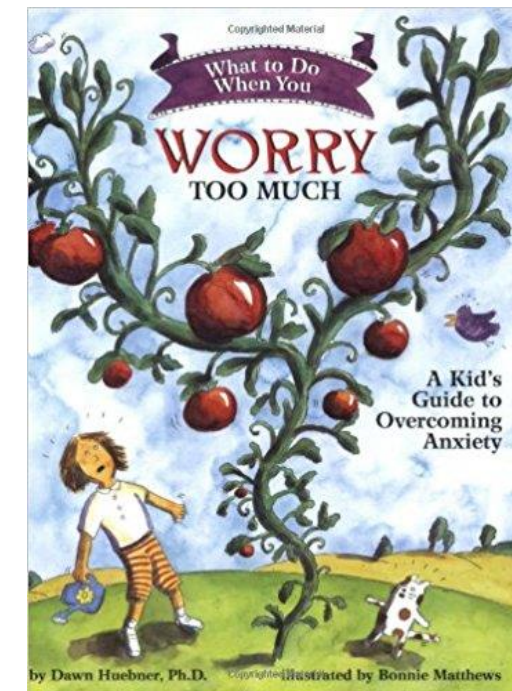
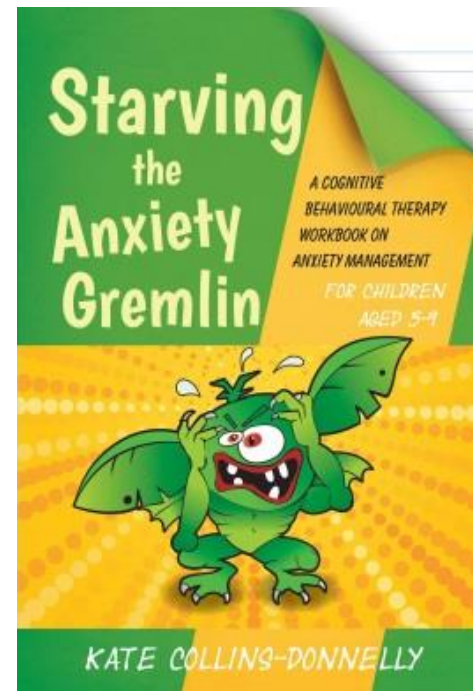
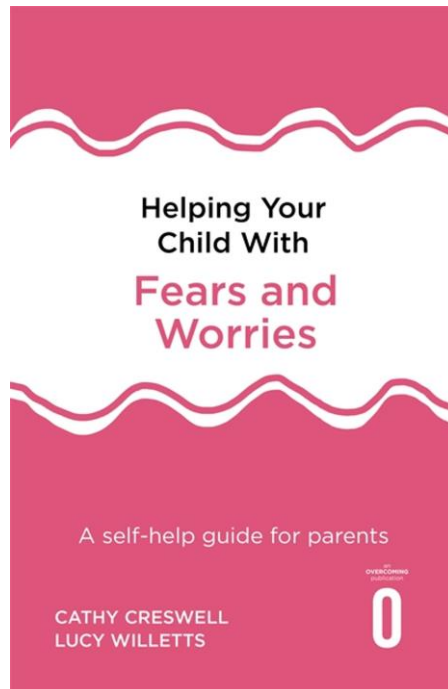
# Learn to relax

- Yoga
- Meditation
- Exercise
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Diaphragmatic Breathing

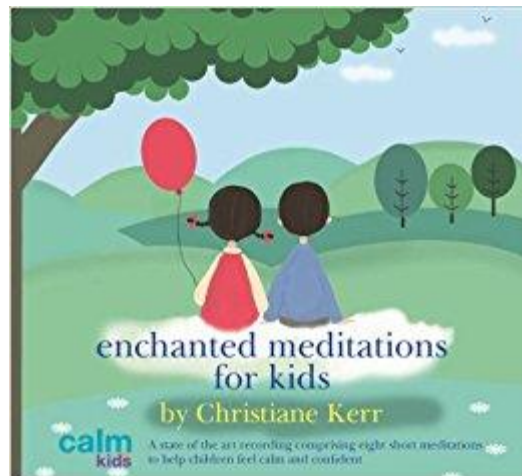




# Books



# Apps and a CD



CD - “Enchanted meditations for Kids” – Cristiane Kerr


# Self-Referral to BICS

Search (e.g. Council tax)



[Home](#) / [Children and families](#) / [Support for parents and carers](#)

## Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BICS)

Make a referral 



Universal Plus referral form

Begin this form

Email: [BICS@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:BICS@barnet.gov.uk) for general enquiries.

Phone: 020 8359 3130 (Our support line is open from 9am to 5pm).



# Groups and Workshops

## Supporting your child's self-esteem (two independent workshops for parents/carers of children under 12 or age 12 and above)

**Details:** Provides parents/carers within each age group with simple strategies to support and bolster self-esteem and -confidence through validation, affirmation and other relevant strategies. The particular focus of each workshop can be adapted to the needs and suggestions of the group. Please email [BICSGroups@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:BICSGroups@barnet.gov.uk) to access this workshop in particular.

## Supporting your child's self-care (for parents of children under age 12)

**Details:** This workshop aims to strengthen parents' ability to support their child's self-care, promoting positive self-care techniques to use with children, including play-based positive time together. The particular focus of each workshop can again be adapted to the needs and suggestions of the group. Please email [BICSGroups@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:BICSGroups@barnet.gov.uk) to access this workshop in particular.

## Sleep Tight online video (for parents of 5-10 year olds)

**Details:** A pre-recorded workshop to help you understand common childhood bedtime struggles and how sleep can be disrupted. Learn how to build a positive bedtime routine and encourage good sleep habits.

## Managing anxiety in Early Years (online video)

**Details:** Do you have a child aged 2-5 years? Would you like to better understand their fears and worries? This pre-recorded workshop will offer brief insight into the reasons we become anxious and the relationship between thoughts, emotions, physical symptoms and behaviour.

It outlines strategies you can use to support your child, such as building up brave behaviour, managing worries and problem solving.

## Parent Toolkit

Parents of school age children who have neurodevelopmental conditions e.g. Autism and/or ADHD

**Details:** Provides 6 sessions to parents over a 6-week period addressing themes such as self-care, stress and anxiety, positive parenting and anger management.

Offering various tips, strategies and activities to aid and empower parents in meeting their own needs as well as those of their children. It will also provide an opportunity for parents with similar experiences to share, connect and support one another

## From Challenging to Managing Workshop

Workshops available for teachers or parents

### Details:

Develop understanding of Children and young people's challenging behaviour, how to respond to it and prevent it developing a whole systemic approach

**Week 1:** Understand (impact, reasons, & vulnerabilities)

**Week 2:** Prevent (whole-class/ family approach, developing skills, empowering)

**Week 3:** Respond (de-escalation,

# Surveys

Learning/ Impact Evaluation:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ParentAnxietyMarch2022>

General Evaluation:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GeneralEvaluationParentAnxietyMarch2022>

# Thank you for listening





# Any questions?

